New York
Theatre Critics' Reviews
1945

Volume VI, Number 1. • Yearly Subscription $15.00 • Week of January 15, 1945

1945 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres in Other Years
Original Reviews Appeared in These Volumes

1944 Vol.

STAGE PLAY	PAGE
*Anna Lucasta	143
*Bell for Adano (A)	65
*Bloomer Girl	118
Catherine Was Great	154
Cherry Orchard (The)	276
Chicken Every Sunday	232
*Dear Ruth	56
Embezzled Heaven	97
*Follow the Girls	222
Hand in Glove	67
*Harvey	95
*I Remember Mama	111
*Jacobowsky and the Colonel	243
*Laffing Room Only	52
*Late George Apley (The)	77
*Mexican Hayride	271
*On the Town	45
Perfect Marriage (The)	104
*Sadie Thompson	84
*School for Brides	156
*Searching Wind (The)	217
*Seven Lively Arts	62
*Sing Out, Sweet Land	48
*Snafu	106
*Soldier's Wife	121
*Song of Norway	149
*Sophie	50
*Ten Little Indians	160
*Trio	43

1943 Vol.

*Carmen Jones	207
*Kiss and Tell	356
*Oklahoma	341
*One Touch of Venus	264
*Two Mrs. Carrolls (The)	304
*Voice of the Turtle (The)	199

1940 Vol.

*Life With Father	457

*Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of January 15, 1945.

1945 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres During 1945
Reviews Appear in This Volume

STAGE PLAY	PAGE
*Hasty Heart (The)	298
Many Happy Returns	296
*Lady Says Yes (The)	294

*Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of January 15, 1945.

THEATRE OPENINGS

"The Hasty Heart"
"A Lady Says Yes"
"Many Happy Returns"

Complete reviews appear in this issue

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the compelte reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers

NEW YORK SUN
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

All Reviews reprinted by permission.

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS : : : 235 EAST 22ND STREET, NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

"A Lady Says Yes"

Musical comedy with book by Clayton Ashley; lyrics by Stanley Adams; music by Fred Spielman and Arthur Gershwin; staging by J. J. Shubert; dances by Boots McKenna; ballets by Natalie Kamarova; settings by Watson Barratt; presented by Mr. Shubert in association with Mr. Ashley at the Broadhurst Theatre, January 10, 1945.

NEW YORK TIMES
January 11, 1945

Unhappy Lady

By LEWIS NICHOLS

LET this faintly disgruntled corner set down a "no" today against "A Lady Says Yes." Opening last evening at the Broadhurst, and offering Carole Landis her debut behind the legitimate footlights, the new musical is at best second-rate. It is handicapped by a book which well might drive a saint to drink, and it has a score which but for one number is mediocre. Possibly because of the material with which they must earn their living, the players for the most part seem lifeless, they go at "A Lady Says Yes" as though it were a duty to be accomplished somehow. As a musical it lacks the necessary sparkle, freshness and gaiety; it drones along over one joke and that not a good one.

• • •

Clayton Ashley, who with J. J. Shubert also is the producer, is the author of the book, which has to do with an aged legend about virility and such things. It opens in 1945, local, and then switches back to 1545, Venice, moves along to 1545, China, and then reverts to the present. Mr. Ashley is not a humorist; his prose is labored and quite often not unsullied. The music is by Fred Spielman and Arthur Gershwin, the latter a member of that great musical family. One song—"You're More Than a Name and an Address"—is a good one and probably will find its way into reasonable renown, but the others are only so-so. Stanley Adams' lyrics are not brilliant but will do.

It is hard to say about Miss Landis. Last evening she was more a visitor from Hollywood making a personal appearance than an actress trying to put over a musical comedy. Her voice probably will not get her into the Metropolitan Opera company, if she cares, but on some future occasion in a good show it should do. Sue Ryan and Bobby Morris try their best to put a bit of activity into "A Lady Says Yes," Miss Ryan being a shouter and Mr. Morris being up from burlesque and not ashamed of it. The fabulous Will Morrissey has contributed a song to the show and Miss Ryan—"Brooklyn, U. S. A."—and this was greeted last evening as if all the audience were over on a spree from that transpontine borough.

The other players include Christine Ayres, who has a considerable figure and with it does a dance in veils and shadows, and Arthur Maxwell, who has a fair-enough voice for some of the songs. The ballets were composed by Natalie Kamarova, the one set in China being a shade mysterious, and Boots McKenna provided the regular dances. Possibly if "A Lady Says Yes" had wandered around a bit more while they conducted a series of radical operations on the book and some of the rest of it, Miss Landis would have been able to make a happier debut. It is far from that as it stands.

THE CAST

Captain Desiri	Pittman Corry
Francesca	Helene Le Berthon
Rosa	Blanche Grady
Carmela	Jackson Jordan
Dr. Bartoli	Jack Albertson
Isabella	Martha King
Scapino	Bobby Morris
Anthony Gaspare	Arthur Maxwell
Christine	Christine Ayres
Hildegarde	Jacqueline Susann
Licetta	Sue Ryan
Gaspare	Earl McDonald
Killer Pepoli	Fred Catania
Second	Al Klein
Pantaloon	Steve Mills
Ghisella	Carole Landis
Page Boy	Francella Schmidt

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
January 11, 1945

This Critic Says 'No'

By HOWARD BARNES

IF J. J. SHUBERT, Clayton Ashley, or any one else connected with "A Lady Says Yes" knew what he was up to, it is certainly not apparent at the Broadhurst. The new musical show leaps ponderously from a local hospital to sixteenth-century Venice. It sandwiches a song about Brooklyn between a pseudo-operatic duet and a Chinese ballet; puts on a prizefight on the banks of the Grand Canal and mixes rough-and-tumble clowning with fancy-dress carnival scenes. In the midst of tedious pandemonium, one may recognize Carole Landis, looking her pin-uppest, and quite a lot of toilers in the theatrical vineyards. They do little to make a bad show better.

• • •

The most astonishing thing about the enterprise is that Ashley has taken credit for what passes as a book. At least he covers quite a bit of territory in his pipe dream, while compiling something of a catalogue of ancient wheezes. Even Marco Polo gets remotely involved in the proceedings, inspiring one of the principals to announce that she thought that was a game played on horses. A good score and lively direction might have helped no end wtih "A Lady Says Yes." The brutal truth is that the Fred Spielman-Arthur Gershwin tunes are dull and the Stanley Adams lyrics are lamentable. Will Morrissey's "Brooklyn, U. S. A." has considerable bounce, as sung by Sue Ryan. Most of the numbers are the sort that you just don't want to remember.

• • •

Far be it from me to even suggest the tortuous labyrinth in which the offering becomes involved. The bits of light that shine through the murk are almost always incidental and sometimes improvised. The Venetian boxing lampoon has some funny moments, contributed by the hard-working Bobby Morris. There is some attractive dancing by Pittman Corry and Ronnie Cunningham. Morris has the good sense to kid the plot on occasion, while the conventional bevy of ballerinas and show girls is all of a bevy. On the whole, the bright spots in "A Lady Says Yes" are definitely fugitive.

• • •

Miss Landis has the thankless task of turning from a hospital attendant into a Venetian courtesan and snaring the affections of a lieutenant who has become a Renaissance freebooter. Her singing is not too satisfactory. Her chances to act are practically nil. Arthur Maxwell plays the hero and Christine Ayres has an anomalous decorative role. Morris and Miss Ryan give the show what tiny punch of gayety it possesses. Set it down as a big and rather bewildering bore.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
January 11, 1945

The Season's Worst Musical

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

THE best way I know of getting you into the spirit of what went on at the Broadhurst Wednesday night is to ring a few snappy changes on the title of the show. Thus, "*The Lady Says Yes*, but this gentleman says no" will suggest the gay wit of the enterprise, while "That was no *Lady* you seen me at, etc." will convey its freshness and originality. I forebear from competing any further, and will merely remark that the town's newest offering is as dreary, corny and stale as a musical comedy can be. I seriously believe that there isn't a single phrase in the music, a single rhyme in the lyrics, a single step in the dancing, a single gag in the book that could not be found in any hopelessly routine musical of a generation ago. Even the costumes are terrible; and so gaudy that it takes work to make out the chorines' faces.

But *A Lady* isn't merely old stuff; it's fourth-rate stuff, and dull smutty stuff as well. It has one of those books that roam from the present back to Venice in 1545, and from there, without ado, to the garden of the Emperor of China, (which wasn't too much of a jump, for Venice looked like Chinatown to begin with.) All this time people were blithely engaging in prize fights as well as duels, and singing about Brooklyn as well as frisking in Venetian carnivals. And when the wind blew from the Adriatic, it wafted in things like "I thought Marco Polo was a game they played on horseback." In the palmier days of the Renaissance, moreover, it apparently wasn't necessary for dancers to keep in step, and a voice without a tremolo was just no voice at all.

A number of people are unhappily involved in all these proceedings. Carole Landis is good to look at; but beyond wrestling with poor material, she lacks the ease and personality for a musical-comedy lead. Christine Ayres does some unexciting dancing, and Pittman Corry some routine ballet steps and leaps. Sue Ryan and Bobby Morris are the comics of the occasion; they work hard and, given a chance, can be entertaining. But their chances in *A Lady Says Yes* are almost as slim as the show's.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
January 11, 1945

Here Are the Facts On 'A Lady Says Yes'

By BURTON RASCOE

AN objective report on a theatrical opening:

"A Lady Says Yes," a new musical opened at the Broadhurst last night. There was a capacity crowd when the curtain went up; but a great many people did not return for the second act.

There was considerable laughter at two old burlesque show stand-bys—one a comical boxing match and the other a skit in which an electrical contraption transfers the ailment of a patient to a dummy, only there is no dummy and the comedian substitutes for one and thereby successively acquires a stutter and the characteristics of an androgyne and is about to become pregnant when he revolts—and blackout.

Two recitatives by Sue Ryan—"I Wonder Why You Wander," and "Brooklyn, U. S. A." —were very well received; there were three encores for the latter. There was no musical accompaniment to these recitals beyond a continuous vamp. The composers, Fred Spielman and Arthur Gershwin, in fact, haven't bothered to compose any music; for even the other musical number that was very well received—"I Don't Care What They Say About Me"—is, practically, note for note, "The Bowery."

Type of Humor

The two comics are Sue Ryan and Bobby Morris. Miss Ryan is short, cute and vivacious. Mr. Morris is short, not so cute and energetic. Here are some of the comic lines supplied them by Clayton Ashley, the author of the book:

Miss Ryan: "Do you like Kipling?"

Mr. Morris: "I don't know; I've never kippled."

Miss Ryan: "Ah, Venice! Where men are men and women are women—neat arrangement, isn't it?"

Mr. Morris (to a passing showgirl): "Ah, senorita?"

Showgirl: "I'm not a senorita; I'm a senora."

Mr. Morris: "Who cares how you sleep?"

Mr. Morris (to Miss Ryan): "I'm the greatest lover in the world. Did you ever hear of Don Juan? Well, I'm Don Two."

Mr. Morris: "Marco Polo is here."

Jacqueline Susann: "He? I thought Marco Polo was something you played on horses with sticks."

The lyrics by Stanley Adams got quite a few laughs, particularly when they were sung by Miss Ryan. The biggest laugh came when, in the Brooklyn recitative, Miss Ryan said: "Our cemetery is all green and flowered waiting for Noel Coward." I have notes on several other jokes and lyric lines but I don't think my editor will let them appear in our family newspaper.

Landis Debut

Carole Landis, the film star, makes her stage debut in this show. She wore some very pretty dresses at different times, smiled cordially, and sang "You're More Than a Name and an Address." It was very well received. I can't remember what else she did but she was on the stage quite often. Christine Ayres, late of "The Ziegfeld Follies" is also there. She wore some stunning gowns and danced a sort of "Dance of the Seven Veils" in a harem-like setting, with only one veil. This was very well received. Pittman Corry and Ronnie Cunningham teamed up in tap and modern dances, and Mr. Corry and Tatiana Grantzeva danced ballet steps together. Both pairings were very well received. Miss Ryan reminds the audience frequently, that there is no plot.

Last night the offering lasted from 8:30 to 11:45. On the whole it wasn't very well received. Many thought it might have been a pretty good burlesque show if it hadn't been so artistic and intellectual.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
January 11, 1945

'A Lady Says Yes' At the Broadhurst

By ROBERT GARLAND

CAROLE LANDIS, lissome young lady from Hollywood, made her Broadway debut last night at the Broadhurst. There, J. J. Shubert, in association with the Clayton Ashley, who is really Maxwell Maltz, the plastic surgeon, presented her in a "new musical" with book by Dr. Maltz, lyrics by Stanley Adams, ballets by Natalie Kamarove, scenery by Watson Barratt and music by Fred Spielman and Arthur Gershwin, brother of Ira and the late lamented George.

Before reaching 44th st., "A Lady Says Yes" had an up-and-down, in-and-out career. In preparation since the Summer of 1943, the title has been changed twice, the sponsorship has been changed three times and as many directors have had a hand in its reshaping. Even so, the piece is certainly not ready to compete with "On the Town," "Follow the Girls" and other modern musicals dealing with sailors and how they get that way.

The trouble with the new arrival is that it can't make up its mind just what it wants to be. It leaps up on the Broadhurst's stage and sings and dances off in all directions.

Musical Mixup

Some of it is revue. Some of it is old-fashioned Winter Garden musical-comedy. Some of it is vaudeville. And some of it, the best part of it, if you ask me, is burlesque. Not that there isn't a plot. There is a plot derived from Balzac's "Droll Stories" and Boccaccio's "Decameron," a plot that is constantly getting in the way of dancing, the fun-making and the music, a plot that finally tries to kid itself and dies in the attempt to do so.

For "A Lady Says Yes" is a dream-play. Starting out in the operating room of a Manhattan hospital in 1945, it wanders all over the world and through the years—to a bedroom in the Venice of 1545, the garden of the Emperor of China in the selfsame period, back to the present day Manhattan hospital and on to a Garden Party in, of all places, Washington, D. C. And the characters, including the Ghisella of Miss Landis, wander right along with it.

It seems that the very pretty Lt. Anthony Caufield, USNR, is indulging in an operation on his nose as he dreams the story. A sound sleeper, he's not over-burdened with imagination.

Burlesque Wins

To me, the most noteworthy characters of our lieutenant's dream are the Scapino of Bobby Morris and the Licetta of Sue Ryan. Especially the latter! Mr. Morris, you will remember, has been seen on stage along with Rags Ragland, Abbott and Costello, and Phil Silvers in the good old days before Paul Moss frightened burlesque over into Jersey. Miss Ryan, as you're well aware, is the tried-and-true vaudevillian who walked away with last year's "Ziegfeld Follies."

As for the others, Miss Landis wears some beautiful gowns, sings a couple of songs, "Without a Caress" and "Don't Wake Them Up Too Soon," quite prettily. But it is the aforesaid Miss Ryan who knocks them cold with "Brooklyn, U.S.A.," the Brooklyn ballad without which no "new musical" is complete. Anthony Maxwell, as the pretty naval man, helps the star with "Without a Caress" and "You're More Than a Name and an Address," which shows up in the final stanza . . .

There's some lovely girls, some handsome costumes, some mediocre dancing and a machine-age interlude on which I'd rather not dwell. And the luscious Miss Landis, weaving through the evening.

NEW YORK POST
January 11, 1945

'A Lady Says Yes' Relies On Old Burlesque Gags

By WILELLA WALDORF

"A LADY SAYS YES," the new musical produced last night at the Broadhurst Theatre, is burdened with a plot so terrible the actors are encouraged to come out before the curtain and complain about it. In this way the management slyly joins the audience in condemning the writer of the book, who also happens to be one of the producers. And so it would appear that the fellow who invented the plot is well aware of its nauseating qualities and ready, nay willing, to laugh the whole thing off, if possible.

To this end Sue Ryan and Bobby Morris, who know their way around vaudeville and burlesque, are permitted to run wild through sixteenth century Venice, using all of the good old tricks to tickle the customers, including that slapstick prize fight number that always brings down the house.

Miss Ryan is tough, vulgar and highly professional at putting over a motley collection of none too brilliant songs, and Mr. Morris is an engaging little fellow with a knowing comedy method. Between them they manage to put a certain amount of zip into "A Lady Says Yes" and several of their scenes are genuinely funny in the old four-a-day tradition.

16th Century Venice

Unfortunately Miss Ryan and Mr. Morris can't very well put on a whole show by themselves, and there are long stretches when the stage is crowded with hordes of people pretending they are living in Venice in the year 1545. (The song lyrics make it 1544, but the program says 1545, an since it's supposed to be just four centuries ago, that's probably correct.

It seems Lieut. Caufield of the Navy undergoes an operation on his nose in 1945 and, while he's under the anesthetic, dreams he's back in Venice in 1545—see? Everybody he's met lately is back there too, including a nurse named Ghisella who turns up as a Venetian courtesan.

The role of Ghisella is played by Carole Landis of the films, who is slim, blonde and apparently a very good-natured girl. In a series of ravishing gowns guaranteed by her courturier to be exact replicas of what the well-dressed courtesan was wearing in Venice back in 1545, Miss Landis talks a couple of rather dreary songs about sex with commendable animation, and the amplifiers obligingly hurl her voice into the rear rows with the requisite amount of wham.

By the time the second act arrives, everybody, including the dreaming lieutenant, is so sick of Venice in 1545 that the scene suddenly changes to China long enough for an elaborate and rather confused Chinese ballet. When we left some time after eleven, they were all back in the hospital and it was 1945 again.

"A Lady Says Yes"' is a thoroughly undistinguished musical show that counts on a few serviceable songs and some good old-time rowdy comedy to help remove the taste of a completely debilitating book. Miss Ryan and Mr. Morris work hard, but they can't perform miracles.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
January 11, 1945

'A Lady Says Yes' but This Critic Says Nope

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"A LADY SAYS YES" is an old-fashioned musical comedy with two good rowdy comics, one funny song and Carole Landis. Its plot is the old one about the bees and the flowers, but told much less prettily than usual. Its book is the work of a Dr. Maxwell Maltz, a plastic surgeon, and it needs cutting.

As you know from the movies, Miss Landis, who made her New York stage debut last night at the Broadhurst, is something of a national monument in human architecture. Even in repose she always looks as though she'd just taken a deep breath. Her dressmaker has spared no effort in draping her suitably from necklace to waistline. Her appearance is friendly and her voice is pleasantly on the torchy side but not very big.

Taking the best first, we come to Bobby Morris and Sue Ryan as a low-comedy team. Morris, an ex-burlesquer and one-time partner of Rags Ragland, is a funny little guy in a nice, dirty sort of way. He puts on a loony prize fight scene which is one of the few enjoyable intervals of the evening. Miss Ryan is right in there with him, and she also has the luck to sing a song by the veteran Will Morrissey, "Brooklyn, U. S. A.," which is a show-stopper.

Florentine? Maybe

Dr. Maltz, working under the writer's alias of Clayton Ashley, has thought it fitting to tell the story of an old Florentine superstition—a belief that if a man's nose has suffered damage and been repaired by surgery, his abilities as a bee are lessened to the point where people go around talking about him. I think Dr. Maltz invented this old Florentine superstition.

So it is that a naval lieutenant goes to a plastic surgeon to get his sneezer mended and while he is under the anaesthetic he dreams that he and Miss Landis are in Florence 300 years ago. This gives everybody a chance to wear lots of costumes. Then, by golly, the dream goes on and everybody joins up with Marco Polo for a trip to China—or am I bothering you?

The staging consists merely of a series of entrances and exits, with the exits being generally the better. The humor? Well, Mr. Morris asks Miss Ryan if she likes Kipling and she says, "I don't know—I've never been kippled." I liked it better when they used to ask Ed Wynn if he liked O. Henry and he said, "No, the peanuts stick in my teeth."

Try as I did to keep my mind on my business, I found my attention wandering during the songs, which are mostly by Stanley Adams, Fred Spielman and Arthur Gershwin. Morrissey's interpolated selection was the only one which kept me on the job. Of course, when Miss Landis had a number it was fun to let the attention wander. I kept wondering if she had to have help getting dressed.

Christine Ayres, Arthur Maxwell and Jacqueline Susann handle secondary roles. Watson Barratt has done the sets and Lou Eisele the bright chorus costumes. The producers are J. J. Shubert and Clayton Ashley.

NEW YORK SUN
January 11, 1945

'A Lady Says Yes,' Broadhurst Musical Show, Is Not One of the Best

By WARD MOREHOUSE

THEY'VE moved those little Indians, all ten of them, around the corner to 45th street and now the Broadhurst is back in the song-and-dance business, the first performance of "A Lady Says Yes" being given last night. This new one tries hard, but makes scant headway. It is not one of the best.

"A Lady Says Yes," a long time on the way, and undoubtedly subjected to no end of tinkering during its road tour, brings along the attractive Carole Landis in its leading role; the brassy and jangling Sue Ryan as a supporting player, and a chorus that rediscovers the old-fashioned tap dance. But the music is generally on the routine side and there is plenty of book trouble.

The book is labored, silly and frequently apologetic—one of those dream plots that takes its players from the present day back to the Venice of four hundred years ago, makes a side trip to China, and then returns to the world of 1945.

There is a lot of color in the show. There are pretty girls, nice costumes, and some elaborate backgrounds by Watson Barratt. Some good dancing here and there, and the inevitable ballet comes along in the second act, Chinese style.

The show's best songs are "Without a Caress" (sung by Miss Landis), "Brooklyn, U. S. A.," and "You're More Than a Name and an Address."

Miss Landis, of the films and a darling of the G. I.'s, makes her Broadway debut in "A Lady Says Yes" and comes through surprisingly well. She wears stunning costumes and is quite spirited all the way, regardless of whether the book places her in the waiting room of a hospital, on a street in old Venice, or in a garden party in Washington.

The strident Sue Ryan, who scored such a hit in the last "Ziegfeld Follies," brings her invigorating ways to this new production and is her hearty self in the "Brooklyn, U. S. A." number, but her material is not as good as she had in her previous appearance locally. Bobby Morris is very energetic and very nimble, does his utmost to be comical and succeeds somewhat in his prizefight scene. Christine Ayres is graceful and good-looking, Ronnie Cunningham dances pleasantly, and Arthur Maxwell is the romantic lieutenant whose dream takes him to the sixteenth century and back again.

"A Lady Says Yes" is good-natured, but it is definitely humdrum and doesn't belong with the town's better song-and-dance shows.

"Many Happy Returns"

Comedy by Clare Kummer; staging by Peter Berneis; settings by Stewart Chaney; presented by Harry Bloomfield at the Playhouse Theatre, January 5, 1945.

THE CAST

Ethel	Nan Butler
Jo Barnett	Michael Dreyfuss
Henry Burton	Neil Hamilton
Albert	Leonard Carey
Fay	Nell O'Day
Eddie	Don Gibson
Charles Barrows	Rex O'Malley
Jane	Jayne Cotter
Cynthia Laceby	Mary Astor
Tom Carruthers	Vincent Gardner

NEW YORK POST
January 6, 1945

Even Mary Astor Can't Save 'Many Happy Returns'

By WILELLA WALDORF

THE author herself tried to stop last night's opening of "Many Happy Returns" at the Playhouse, but there's a war boom on in the theatres and a number of so-called producers seem to figure that anything will go over these evenings if it has a couple of movie names in it.

"Many Happy Returns" has the names of Mary Astor and Neil Hamilton up in lights outside, but Clare Kummer was right. The play should never have been inflicted upon Broadway. As we recall, Miss Kummer protested to the Dramatists' Guild that a lot of people had been tampering with her script, and the Guild has given the producer, Harry Bloomfield, ten days to think up a suitable reply.

There's just one answer to that. No matter who's responsible, "Many Happy Returns" is so bad it's sometimes almost funny, and it is directed so ineptly by Peter Berneis that the whole thing soon becomes utterly unbelievable on Broadway where things are still supposed to be on a professional basis.

Apparently the play is designed as high comedy about an old New York family. The son of the house, though happily married, has taken to running around with a fascinating divorcee. His father, an impeccable gentleman with just the correct amount of gray at the temples, decides to put a stop to his son's infatuation and becomes faintly embroiled himself. Two handsome sets by Stewart Chaney are squandered before the evening is over.

Seldom have we seen playwright and director in a state of more acute agony over the business of getting people on and off the stage. A good deal of the time the actors appeared to be pardonably confused as to whether they were going or coming. Nobody seemed to belong anywhere, and there was one vague character who seemed to have so little to do with the performance in general that he was probably not an actor at all but simply a curious bystander who wandered in the stage door from 45th St. and just stayed until the curtain mercifully fell.

The only bright spot in the melee was Mary Astor of the films making her Broadway stage debut. She has acted a good deal on the Coast and might easily prove a distinct asset to some play that makes a bit more sense than "Many Happy Returns." Her voice is uncommonly attractive. She has looks, poise and stage presence. She even played the piano last night instead of leaving it to an offstage expert.

Neil Hamilton, Rex O'Malley, Jayne Cotter, Michael Dreyfuss and the rest seemed unhappy in one of the worst bloomers of this or any season.

NEW YORK SUN
January 6, 1945

'Many Happy Returns,' Done at Playhouse, a Hopeless Little Comedy

By WARD MOREHOUSE

THE Playhouse has been having its troubles this season, getting a steady parade of transients, but last night it struck absolute bottom. The newest play in 48th street is "Many Happy Returns" and its departure can be expected momentarily. The play is completely hopeless.

Clare Kummer, who has given this town such deft comedies as "Rollo's Wild Oat" and "A Successful Calamity," is billed as the author of "Many Happy Returns." Harry Bloomfield is the producer and the playbill lists Peter Berneis as the director. There is not a fragment of entertainment in any minute of the proceedings.

The play is painfully acted, ineptly written and directed, and there hasn't been a piece along in years revealing greater awkwardness in moving its characters on and off stage. Whatever Miss Kummer may have had in mind originally her play, as performed last evening, concerns the complications that come about when one Henry Burton, a youngish grandfather, calls at the home of the alluring Cynthia Laceby, with cash in hand, to protect the marriage of his son, that young man having fallen under Mrs. Laceby's spell to an alarming extent. But she handles herself coolly, and boy and father as well, and at 10:50 P.M. all was well with everybody except the audience.

Mary Astor is restrained and indeed very decorative in an impossible part. Neil Hamilton has tough going with the role of Mr. Burton and Rex O'Malley struggles feebly as Mr. Barrows. All the others are quite futile.

Perhaps ti was all wrong for "Many Happy Returns" to have been produced at all, but an even greater mistake was made in bringing it to Broadway. Miss Kummer is sadly off form in this new piece at the Playhouse. It is dreadful.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
January 6, 1945

'Many Happy Returns' —Of Days Bygone and Forgotten, No Doubt

By JOHN CHAPMAN

IF you will please be so kind as to sit down now and have a glass of sherry we can talk this out. Just one glass, mind you, because neither of us wants to get stiff as a goat, which would happen if we had two.

I have been pretending to be a reporter on plays, but I'm just a boy. I did see Montgomery & Stone and various Mutt and Jeff companies, but these were road troupes and I never got to the Big City until the Capitol Theatre opened with Arthur Pryor's band in the pit and Pearl Regay dancing on the stage.

A little later I saw Alfred Lunt in "Clarence" and Raymond Hitchcock in "Hitchy-Koo," but I never did see anything by Henry Arthur Jones or Sir Arthur Wing Pinero and I was too late to catch Clare Kummer's "Good Gracious, Annabelle!" So I am not competent to report upon Mrs. Kummer's "Many Happy Returns," which opened last night at the Playhouse, because it must date from before my time and let's have that second glass of sherry come what may.

"Many Happy Returns" did open last evening. People poured sherry out of decanters at any time of night. Once they even poured brandy out of a decanter, which was a bad way of keeping brandy. At the end a very pretty woman said she was going to have a baby and this just beat the cars.

Involved in this sitting-room comedy about polite love are some pleasant actors, including Neil Hamilton, who has been in more than 400 movies, and Mary Astor, who in all

her life will never be in enough movies or enough plays. Miss Astor, making her Broadway stage debut, is the dream-woman you would expect her to be—beautiful, grown-up, self-assured and possessed of a very fine stage voice.

I hope she comes back again.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
January 7, 1945

Something to Forget About

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

SEEMS to me the Playhouse gets a new play every week, and I'd be far from surprised if it got a new one next week too. For *Many Happy Returns* is one of the most garrulous vacuums, one of the most imbecilic rigmaroles that even Broadway has ever seen. Miss Kummer is said to be feuding with the producer over script changes he made without her approval; but to enlist any real sympathy, she would have to charge him with a complete substitution. For there isn't a good line in the whole play.

It wouldn't be far off simply to describe *Many Happy Returns* as something about a lot of people in evening togs. For the action—rather daring word to use in the circumstances—veers in so many directions that it promptly snuffs out the central idea of a middle-aged man who goes to the woman his young married son is entangled with and momentarily gets entangled himself. Actually the play is an endless succession of exits and entrances, with everybody having a brief gabble with everybody else. The male characters are such a varied collection of half-wits and stuffed shirts that I should have thought Miss Kummer bore the opposite sex a grudge had she not dealt as badly—except in Mary Astor's case—by her own.

The production is almost worse than the play. Mr. Bernels, perhaps because he is too busy being a traffic cop to function as a director, has just let everything sag. Nobody does anything that approaches acting, so let everybody in the cast except Miss Astor be nameless. In her Broadway debut, she—besides being lovely to look at—manages to scrape together a pleasant moment or two. Which is something of an achievement.

NEW YORK TIMES
January 6, 1945

Long Year Older

By LEWIS NICHOLS

A WEIRD LITTLE BAGGAGE called "Many Happy Returns" wandered into the Playhouse last evening. Thought up by Clare Kummer and participated in by Mary Astor, it sent the drama rocking as far back on its heels as the drama can go without falling. All about a femme fatale who is particularly fatale to bankers, their sons and their friends, it is one of the most confusing plays ever to escape the tryout graveyards and stagger on to Broadwuy. As though everyone had been tring to make "Many Happy Returns" a monument of its kind, it has been directed so as to bring out every static moment; and the players act as though they had memorized all those lines and hoped merely to say them before the audience could get away. That was a tie last evening.

Miss Astor is making her Eastern legitimate stage debut; she is attractive and probably might be nice to see in a play sometime. She is the lady who charms the young banker, then the young banker's father, the old banker—who had known her once before—then the old banker's old banking partner. Neil Hamilton represents the older generation and Rex O'Malley is the partner, the latter being pleasant enough and apparently realizing "Many Happy Returns" is no great shakes. Peter Berneis has directed so that collections of second wives, children, friends, unidentifiable persons and an elderly butler come in one side and go out the other as though the Stewart Chaney set were a revolving door. It would not have been surprising to see centrifugal force knock someone out of line and up the chimney over the fireplace. No one left that way, though.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
January 6, 1945

Hapless, Not Happy

By HOWARD BARNES

THE program at the Playhouse would have one believe that a new comedy is being shown there. If there is anything new or comic about "Many Happy Returns," then "Ben Hur" is hot out of the oven heroic tragedy. Clare Kummer has not even devised one valid dramatic situation for her latest play. She has quite failed to decorate it with amusing characters or laughing lines. The players are caught flat-footed by the script. Frequently they do not need bad writing to accentuate their failings.

* * *

The best that can be said for this inaugral Harry Bloomfield production is that the sponsor has retained a scenic designer named Stewart Chaney. The wizard of the backdrops has executed a couple of elegant settings. The more the pity that so little of any possible theatrical significance transpires in them. Mary Astor and Rex O'Malley occasionally create the illusion that a show is in progress. For most of the time, a spectator is likely to feel that he is eavesdropping on possibly piquant goings-on, only to discover that they consist of a lot of dull prattle.

* * *

Miss Astor comes back to the stage after many years in Hollywood with an assurance that warranted better material. As the middle-aged femme fatale, who attracts a young married man, only to have his father try to take over the situation romantically, she is steady and attractive. What shouldn't happen to a dog is the only way to describe some of the business she is asked to engage in, such as calling the youngster's penurious grandfather late at night and getting the old codger to give him a town house.

* * *

O'Malley is the brightest other facet in the performing pattern of "Many Happy Returns." His role of an old family friend, who consents to take the Circe off the hands of both son and father is certainly anomolous, but he whips out some fragments of bright make-believe in spite of the piece itself. Neil Hamilton, on the other hand, and most of the others in the cast, just stand around and indulge in boring conversation. Whether or not the plot turns out happily is not for me to say, since nothing vaguely resembling a plot could be detected by your reviewer. All I know is that the play is far from a happy entertainment.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
January 6, 1945

'Many Happy Returns' Opens at Playhouse

By ROBERT GARLAND

A GRADUATE of the Michael Todd School of the Working Theatre, my friend Harry Bloomfield hung out a shingle of his own last night at the Playhouse. Harry's first play, differing from Fanny's, is *not* by Bernard Shaw. I wish it were.

Harry's first play is by Clare Kummer, she of "Good Gracious, Anabelle," "Rollo's Wild Oat" and the ballad, "Dearie". The new one is "Many Happy Returns," a natural born trouble-maker.

From the start, all went wrong. Henry Hull, was-to-have-been star, got mad and wouldn't play. But not before he had planted himself in the center of the stage to take over the directorial job for which Rex O'Malley had been engaged.

Then Rex went into the cast, Roy Hargrave, followed by a Mr. Berneis, did more direction. Neil Hamilton moved into Mr. Hull's deserted role, Miss Kummer entered suit, the Musicians' Union——I

Nobody but Harry Bloomfield knows the half of it!

Good Gracious, Clare

In spite of everything, "Many Happy Returns" showed up last night at the Playhouse. In the presence of a pro-Bloomfield congregation, it turned out to be a mild and mannered comedy projected for all it's worth by a group of actors not always on the playwright's side. True enough, the folks on stage spent their evening acting. But they acted more like ladies and gentlemen, less like characters in a Broadway play.

The story of "Many Happy Returns" is the one in which Son, who is married, gets mixed up with Lady Adventuress, and Father, in an effort to bring Son back to his senses, becomes involved in an extra-marital complication of his own. And with the same Lady Adventuress.

After three acts of small talk, some of which is witty, some of which is not, every man goes back to his missus and the audience goes home.

Clare Kummer can do better than this. And has!

Harry's Wild Oat

Harry Bloomfield has done everything that could be done with this, his first production. He has provided a cast of established players, headed by Mary Astor. And handsome backgrounds by Stewart Chaney. And costumes that are definitely Park ave.

And, while many a mishap was going on, mishaps over which he had no control, he helped out with the patience of a Job. Don't say I said so, but Miss Kummer let him down.

Miss Astor is the Lady Adventuress with a way and an apartment of her own. She walks in and out of the mild proceedings with great assurance and no small skill.

Neil Hamilton, as Father, is every inch a gentleman. To watch him pour a glass of sherry would bring tears of appreciation to Emily Post's own eyes. Leonard Carey brings back my faith in butlers. Rex O'Malley's friend of the family is a joy . . .

If at first you don't succeed, Harry, keep away from Kummer.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
January 6, 1945

'Many Happy Returns' Arrives Stillborn

By BURTON RASCOE

TOWARD the close of the solemn wake, which was held at the Playhouse last night, the master of the menage in "Many Happy Returns" observed to the butler: "We haven't seen many nights like this one, have we, Henry?"

The butler's answer was delayed by ribald laughter in the audience. It broke out again when the butler replied: "Thank heavens, no!"

Thus does the unfortunate playwright (in this instance Clare Kummer) sometimes unwittingly pen a line of dialogue, which the audience seizes as its verdict on the play.

With the general sentiment of that verdict I must regretfully agree. In fact, I'll say I have never seen ANY night in the theater like the one last night. I have experienced far, far worse ones. Indeed, I have experienced much worse nights at plays which nevertheless managed to prosper. But I have never seen any night in the theater exactly like the one at the Playhouse last evening.

The play arrived dead. And I had the feeling that it may once have had vibrant life; that it was a pretty good comedy—in script. Just how it was done in and laid out for burial I don't know. But there it was—a corpse on the stage. And a very attractive corpse, too, in an orchidaceous setting by Stewart Chaney.

Play Had Its Woes

News has been printed, of course, that "Many Happy Returns" had its troubles in the out-of-town tryouts; that Henry Hull, co-director and a featured player, resigned when another director was called in to assist; that this new director was replaced by still another director; that there were cast changes, and, finally, that the author was protesting to the Dramatists' Guild against the producer's changes in the script and cast.

I suppose the play expired of contention. It had a good idea: The wealthy, self-satisfied, middle-aged pater familias goes to the apartment of a beautiful thrice-married siren, who appears to be breaking up his son's marriage, with the intention of buying her off for $10,000, and presently finds himself ensnared by her declaration that she has never been in love with anybody but him; that she had fallen in love with him when they first met many years ago.

A notion, you see, with possibilities. And the cast is attractive and talented. First, there is the still lovely Mary Astor (one of the screen and stage's prettiest women) in the siren's role. Neil Hamilton, as the father, is more than handsome enough for the premise. Rex O'Malley, that pungent comedian, is there to give the play a quizzical turn. Michael Dreyfuss, as one of the family by marriage, is, as you know, one of the most endearingly comical youngsters on the stage. Jayne Cotter, a comparative newcomer, is comely and assured. And Nan Butler, as a pants-crazy adolescent, is simply a darling. The others are: Leonard Carey, Don Gibson, Vincent Gardner and Nell O'Day.

But all the substance has gone from the play and all the spirit from the cast. Something that should be surcharged with the life of high comedy moves like the Dead March from "Saul." Last night I felt as though I had stumbled in on some private grief. Maybe, of course, there never was any play there in the first place, only the idea of it.

The production is Harry Bloomfield's first. Too bad.

"The Hasty Heart"

Play by John Patrick; staging by Bretaigne Windust; settings by Raymond Sovey; presented by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse at the Hudson Theatre, January 3, 1945.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
January 4, 1945

'Hasty Heart' Touching Drama of a Lonely Scot

By JOHN CHAPMAN

THE good plays of this more than ordinarily good theatrical season have been sharply witty, fanciful, affectionate, full of gags or comfortably homey, according to which one you have picked. Last night another one, "The Hasty Heart," arrived and filled another niche by being very touching.

It is the story of a lad who never had anything and who feels that he must therefore never give anything of himself. A Scot he is, and is by heritage conditioned to ordinary economies. To these he adds a penuriousness of self. When others offer kindliness and even affection he rejects them, for, he reasons in his careful mind, sorrow is born in the hasty heart. One must not give oneself too easily.

Playwright John Patrick has placed his Scottish boy among five other wounded men in a British hospital back of the Assam-Burma front. Taking the easiest way out, Mr. Patrick has made his five convalescents an American, an Australian, a New Zealander, a Briton and some kind of negro native. They are, for the most part, carelessly labeled and sketchily typed, for Mr. Patrick's only interest is in the lad from Scotland.

This one is cold, unfriendly, fiercely proud, unapproachable — and, though apparently healthy, doomed to die in a couple of weeks. Knowing that he cannot live, his ward companions and the nurse in charge try to give him what they can of friendship.

Touching—and Funny

The nurse offers even love—but he is a grim and lonely boy and the going is hard for the others and for himself. They do finally break through his reserve. He was a poor boy, and in his pride he had taught himself to hate anything he could not have; but now, with so short a time to live, he discovers that there are people—any kind—Yanks, Tommies, even jungle natives—who have friendship to give without asking anything in return . . . except friendship.

"The Hasty Heart" is touching but not dolorous. Its characters—even the Scot—have humor. In performance it is excellent, and to me Richard Basehart is exactly right, as the lad from the highlands. His burr is thick but not overdone. The softening of his rigid aloofness into hungry loneliness, and then into an eagerness to live among fellow human beings, is a well-planned, well-played transition which inspires great sympathy and brings a rather lasting lump to the throat.

As the nurse, Anne Burr has quiet sincerity and grace, an attractive presence and a most lovely voice. The role of the Yank, most important of the other characters, is well handled by John Lund. Bretaigne Windust directed, Raymond Sovey designed the sets, and Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse are the producers.

THE CAST

Orderly	Francis Nielsen
Yank	John Lund
Digger	John Campbell
Kiwi	Victor Chapin
Blossom	Earl Jones
Tommy	Douglas Chandler
Margaret	Anne Burr
Colonel	J. Colville Dunn
Lachlen	Richard Basehart

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
January 4, 1945

'The Hasty Heart' Falls Short of Being Dramatic

By BURTON RASCOE

"THE HASTY HEART," the new John Patrick play, which opened at the Hudson last night, is a penetrating character study and perhaps a salutary lesson in human relationships, with two or three tense moments in it and a few amusing lines, but its appeal, I think, is distinctly limited; for it never succeeds in being really dramatic or very pleasurable.

Ostensibly it is a sympathetic study of the Scotch temperament (or, rather, of what is alleged to be characteristic of the Scots) but actually it is a study of all fiercely prideful individualists and of the loneliness they create for themselves by their uncompromising independence and self-satisfaction. And it is a plea to warmer hearted persons to be tolerant and understanding toward such warped souls; for, underneath, the author implies, these intransigents are only hurt idealists with a great ache and need for love, friendship and kindness.

Story of Rehabilitation

Nurses working in the rehabilitation hospitals (psychiatric divisions) tell me that cases such as that of Lachlen, the Scot in "The Hasty Heart," are fairly common and among the very hardest to deal with, requiring infinite tact. Such patients, they say, resent pity above all things; they don't want to be coddled; they hate to be told, "You are looking fine!" when they know damned well they are not, or to be gushed over with false expressions designed to cheer a patient up.

It is best, these nurses tell me, to respect the moods of such men; to be firm, casual, direct and, in all things, utterly sincere with them until they invite or solicit your interest—you cannot force yourself upon them. And that, they tell me, goes not only for Scots but for men wounded and suffering from "battle fatigue" (formerly called shell-shock) of every other racial strain; for those whose lives have been privileged as well as for the underprivileged, for college graduates as well as for farm boys, for athletes as well as for fledglings in the creative arts.

The trouble with "The Hasty Heart," so far as its dramatic content is concerned, is that you know, just as soon as the problem is established in the first act, how the play is going to end—that Lachlen will be redeemed at last as a friendly social being, a warm and eager integer in the small heterogeneous unit in which he finds himself. But neither love nor pity nor friendliness nor the imminence of death seems quite ever to touch his insufferable pride.

Strange Love

It does finally dawn, in the last act, upon the nurse and five other convalescents in this British general hospital on the Assam-Burma front (where the scene is laid) that by kindness they can never get anywhere with this dour, intractable Scot, so they give him the rough and silent treatment. This breaks him. But, in the theatrical final scene, where he shows he is won over by his getting into his kilts to be photographed with the gang, there is little indication that he has changed any or has had any urgent motive for doing so.

Meanwhile he has been exhibited in such an unpleasant light, as such a thoroughly self-complacent and unlikable sort, that I for one, could see nothing plausible about the nurse's (Anne Burr's) falling in love with him, nor for the other convalescents' taking such trouble to make him like them.

Richard Basehart does an excellent job as the Scot, John Lund is entirely credible as the Yank. Miss Burr is beautiful, but last night she seemed to play rather somnambulistically, without warmth or concern. The others merely filled in the scene. The set by Raymond Sovey is minutely naturalistic.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
January 4, 1945

In Good Beat

By HOWARD BARNES

A TOUCHING and frequently moving war drama has been brought to the Hudson by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse. "The Hasty Heart" is rich with those pinpricks of theatrical illusion and emotional evocation which add up to a stabbing entertainment on the stage. John Patrick has written about a lonely and embittered Scot, dying in a hospital behind the Assam-Burma front, with artistry, humor and sincerity. Bretaigne Windust has done a brilliant job of staging and the several actors and one actress who make up the company rarely falter in making this a new and notable production.

* * *

The line between sentiment and sentimentality is difficult to define. "The Hasty Heart" takes big chances, as it relates the efforts of five guys in a convalescent ward to be nice to an arrogant sergeant who is doomed to die. Sorrow may be the ultimate answer to a heart suddenly quickened to friendship and love. It is eloquent and affecting in the Patrick script and the performing of that script. While not a genuine tragedy the offering is singularly honest and pertinent. One does not have to have been in Burma to recognize the full

weight of a tale which might be told endlessly about war, men of good will and death.

* * *

The author is not always so assured in his construction as he is in his character delineation and his dialogue. The proud Scot, who will take no favors from men who have been asked to give him a lift in his last days, is inclined to overdo his act. The last scene does not really tie the continuity together. For all of that, Patrick has written with imagination and passion and his comic asides never fail to make the show a splendid contrast of light and shadow. Since Raymond Sovey's set is perfect for the action, "The Hasty Heart" has enough quality to offset its lack of craftsmanship.

* * *

Richard Basehart plays the Scot, who gradually makes friends with a group of fellow-wounded, and then turns on them bitterly when he thinks they have been nice to him through pity alone, with remarkable versatility. John Lund is even better as the Yank ambulance driver who tells him off in his moment of bitterest social negation. As a nurse Anne Burr is superbly restrained and believable. John Campbell, Victor Chapin and the others take you right into a base hospital. Writing, direction, acting and production meld in "The Hasty Heart" to make a fine and challenging war play.

NEW YORK POST
January 4, 1945

'The Hasty Heart' a Deeply Moving Play at the Hudson

By WILELLA WALDORF

"THE HASTY HEART," produced by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse last night at their Hudson Theatre, is the best play yet to come out of this war. Probably this is because it is not, strictly speaking, a play about war, but a play about people who just happen to be involved in a war.

Although the author, John Patrick, was an ambulance driver with the American Field Service and collected his material in a British hospital back of the lines in Burma, he is more interested in character and human relationships than he is in war itself. He has written a play about half a dozen men in a convalescent ward that is not only remarkably entertaining but, as it progresses, profoundly touching and deeply moving as well.

When his play begins, only five of the six beds in the ward are occupied, but the sixth is promptly filled by a young Scots sergeant of the Cameron Highlanders. A proud, stubborn, opinionated, rude and exasperating young man he is, but his wardmates go easy with him because he has at the most six weeks to live.

Their friendliness brings forth unexpected emotional response from a lonely and pathetic boy who has always expected the worst and got it. Then when all his defenses are down he suddenly discovers that they knew about him all along, and leaps to the conclusion that what he had taken for good-fellowship was merely pity.

The play falters, and falters rather badly, along toward the end, losing its hold on the audience for a few minutes, but pulls itself together in time for the final curtain. Except for this brief contretemps—which may yet be smoothed over—"The Hasty Heart" plays on the emotions very artfully indeed, without ever descending into the maudlin. Fundamentally, Mr. Patrick's play is a tragedy, but he is never inclined to be too tragic about it. It is also one of the merriest pieces on Broadway.

Under Bretaigne Windust's easy direction a good cast plays together like a well-trained orchestra. As the young Scot, Richard Basehart manages the none to easy feat of making an alarmingly dour young man tremendously appealing when you get to know him. John Lund is just about perfect as the Yank ambulance driver in the next bed who never could stand Scots, principally because his grandfather was one, and Anne Burr is warmly understanding as the nurse who knows a bit about Scotland because she once taught school there. Raymond Sovey has set the play simply and effectively.

NEW YORK SUN
January 4, 1945

'The Hasty Heart' Is Warm and Affecting, Well Played and Directed

By WARD MOREHOUSE

SINCE that historic evening in the long, long ago when "Life With Father" came into the Empire things have gone well with Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse. They brought forth the extraordinary "Arsenic and Old Lace." They have become co-owners of a playhouse, the Hudson, and there last evening they presented "The Hasty Heart," by John Patrick.

"The Hasty Heart" is a warming and deeply affecting play. It is strongly acted and has been beautifully directed by Bretaigne Windust. There is a believability about the locale and the characters and Richard Basehart, as a young Scotch soldier, a man of fierce arrogance and long-nurtured bitterness, who has a distrust of the whole human race, gives an admirable performance.

Playwright Patrick has based his play on his observations and experiences when he was at the Assam-Burma front with the American Field Service. There are intervals of diffuseness in this play, and frequently the author's material is thinly spread, but, taking it as a whole, "The Hasty Heart" is a play of dignity and distinction. It's my belief that the Messrs. Lindsay & Crouse have done the trick again.

Capt. Patrick's young Scotch sergeant, Lachlen McLachlen, has but six weeks to live when he is brought into a British military hospital. He hasn't been told that he is doomed but the others of the convalescent ward know the truth. His fellow patients finally succeed in breaking down his stubbornness and breaking through his pride and distrust and he accepts their friendship, the first he has known in all his life. But when he learns of his condition he again turns upon the group with resentment and fury, mistaking their kindliness for pity. He is won over again, however, and there is gallantry to the Scot and to the play at the finish.

Richard Basehart brings tremendous vitality and feeling to the role of the stormy and sullenly suspicious Scot who was born illegitimate and whose life has been one of contempt for his fellow man. There is also a compelling performance from John Lund, a young actor who has much of the quality that belonged to the late Lawrence Leslie and in saying that I can pay Mr. Lund no greater tribute.

Anne Burr gives appealing sincerity to the role of the understanding nurse who accepts the fiery Lachlen's proposal of marriage, and who does so much to make something human of him. There are lusty performances from Douglas Chandler as the Englishman, John Campbell as the Australian and Victor Chapin as the New Zealander. And last night's presentation at the Hudson gives the 44th Street block its second Windust-directed play within a week.

"The Hasty Heart" is by no means an overpowering play but it is an interesting one. It has great simplicity and sincerity and comes as another welcome contribution to Broadway's theatrical season.

Lindsay & Crouse are off to a fine start at the Hudson.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
January 4, 1945

'The Hasty Heart' Bows At Hudson Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

WITH 64 backers behind it, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse presented "The Hasty Heart" last evening before an audibly appreciative audience in their recently acquired Hudson Theatre. A tense, tough, tender play by John Patrick, it's a comedy about a tragedy, sensitively directed by the sensitive Bretaigne Windust, admirably backgrounded by the admirable Raymond Sovey, and extraordinarily well acted by an extraordinary group of gifted youngsters.

Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse know a good play when they write it. "Life With Father," for instance. They also know a good play when they read it. "The Hasty Heart," for example. The new tenant of the handsome old Hudson is a very good play, indeed. Its point of view is fresh. Its dialogue is believable. Its leading character—its two leading characters, really—are alive and kicking. Especially the Scotsman whose hasty heart gives the piece its title.

He, if there ever was one, is a rugged individualist, an egocentric Caledonian who practically slays himself with the pride which is self-protection. Yet so surely, so sympathetically, has John Patrick sculptured him, that you like him in spite of himself. I do, at any rate! And so, I'm sure, will you.

Yank, Who Isn't

The other leading character with height and breadth and thickness is the Yank who hates to be called a Yank because he hails from Georgia. Playwright Patrick, drawing on his own experience, knows these men of war so thoroughly, appreciates them so wholeheartedly, writes about them so honestly, that he provides the actors with something innately animate upon which to build. It's a good thing he does so, for the tale he tells is one of character, not of action.

The entire movement of "The Hasty Heart" takes place in a convalescent ward of a British General Hospital in the rear of the Assam-Burma front, strikingly reproduced by the versatile Mr. Sovey. Here, when the curtain rises, are the aforesaid Yank; Digger, the Australian; Kiwi, the New Zealander; Tommy, the Englishman, and Blossom, the native soldier. Patients all, they are under the guardianship of Nurse Margaret (they call her sister) and the Colonel, a British medico.

Enter Lachlen MacLachlen, the Scotsman, who has but six weeks to live following an operation. The patients know it, the nurse knows it, and, of course, the doctor. All but MacLachlen. What follows displays his arrogance, his discovery of his fate, his final bitterness. It's all fine, funny, strangely fascinating.

Congratulations

At the request of the doctor and the nurse, MacLachlen's friendship is won over by the fellow members of his ward. It takes more than a little doing. But, by means of the Scottish get-up the laddie has always yearned for, it is finally accomplished. Then, learning they have known about his death-sentence all along, he turns on them, accusing them of pity instead of camaraderie. He's right, too. Of a certainty, sorrow is born of a hasty heart, just as the Scotsman say.

The self-centered Scot is marvelously played by Richard Basehart. Yank is scarcely inferior in the hands of John Lund. In the scene in which he puts MacLachlen in his place, he is superb. The others are excellent — Douglas Chandler as the giggley Tommy; John Campbell as the prize-fighting Digger; Victor Chapin as the lanky New Zealander; Earl Jones as the mumbo-jumbo native; Anne Burr is sweet and soft-voiced as Sister Margaret, which is all she is asked to be.

Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse are to be congratulated on producing "The Hasty Heart" in the first place and, in the second place, for producing it so flawlessly. As I have pointed out, it is tense, tough and tender. And perhaps unfashionable, believing, as it does, in the essential decency and dignity of the human race.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
January 4, 1945

1945 Makes a Nice Debut

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

THE HASTY HEART is an interesting and now and then compelling piece of theater that gets 1945 off to a nice start. But,

though I enjoyed the play and think many other people will also, I can only regret that Mr. Patrick—by too often succumbing to the obvious and the sentimental — let slip the chance to write something of far larger stature. For *The Hasty Heart* provides a familiar theme with not only a timely setting and a special circumstance; it also takes an unfamiliar turn, it also has the opportunity to achieve a higher than usual level. As it is, what might have been an ironic human tragedy has been sheared away to nothing beyond effective popular theater.

The play concerns a young Scots soldier who —unaware that he has but a short time to live—is brought into British convalescent ward in Burma. Having fought for everything he has got in life, he is sore at the world; and being consumed with terrific defensive pride, he is surly and distrustful toward every one he meets. The men in the ward, and the ward nurse, knowing Lachlen's fate, do everything they can — in spite of his behavior — to be friendly. Only after many rebuffs and mighty efforts do they win him over. Won over, he exults in the friendship he has always craved. Then his Colonel is compelled by Army regulations to tell him of his real condition. In a flash Lachlen grasps that all this friendliness has sprung from pity; his pride reasserts itself, and he bitterly slams the door on his companions. But in *The Hasty Heart* it once again reopens.

One knows that it will—for the whole tone of the play premises a sentimental rather than tragic ending; indeed, the play itself revels in all of its sentimental opportunities, and even the character of Lachlen is projected for its theater values rather than its really human ones. Though you instantly guess his loneliness and stubborn pride, Lachlen is introduced as almost a freak, and for quite a while permitted to display his misanthropy in stock joke-book Scotch terms of thrift, opinionativeness, and contempt for all other nations. It is the pathos of his fate and the reality of his type, rather than the character itself, that give Lachlen his human appeal.

And since Mr. Patrick fails to characterize Lachlen with any unusual perceptiveness, it is no surprise that he cannot face up to the tragic implications in the Colonel's disclosure; that he refuses to throw Lachlen back on himself, the victim of his own character and the senseless cruelty of life; and the more tragic a victim from being plunged back into the wilderness after reaching the Promised Land. Though Lachlen is brought round in the end with some plausibility, all the real sinew goes out of the story; and the Colonel's disclosure, instead of effecting a termination, becomes merely a dramatic device to stretch out the story. Certainly audiences, almost to a man, will prefer Mr. Patrick's ending; but all the same *The Hasty Heart* has in it the seeds of a much bigger play.

What, in addition to the interest in its story, makes *The Hasty Heart* attractive is its background. Lachlen's ward-mates — a Yank, a Tommy, a Negro colonial, an Aussie and a New Zealander—are lively and colorful stage people. Their talk has a natural ring to it; their humor, even its very lameness at times, springs out of themselves; their attitude toward Lachlen, their pranks and their kidding, have something human about them. They are much better soldiers than the theater generally provides us with.

The production also has considerable merit. Bretaigne Windust has given the play life, color and movement, and brought the acting —itself uneven—into some kind of unity. Richard Basehart, given the limits of Mr. Patrick's characterization, makes a very good Lachlen. John Lund makes an extraordinarily good American; and John Campbell, Earl Jones, Victor Chapin and Douglas Chandler are all adequate or better as the other soldiers. As the nurse, Anne Burr, though rather lacking in flexibility, is generally effective. Raymond Sovey has designed an attractive and serviceable set.

NEW YORK TIMES
January 4, 1945

"The Hasty Heart"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

ANOTHER good play was added to the Broadway list last evening when Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse brought John Patrick's "The Hasty Heart" to the Hudson Theatre. Unlike the producers' earlier activities, this one is not always a comedy. Treating of a lonely soldier who finally finds friends, it is as often moving as it is funny. Having gathered his material as a volunteer for the American Field Service, Mr. Patrick has made an honest picture of types and individuals, and the cast of "The Hasty Heart" plays them well. A concession or two have been made to the theatre, but the play in the main is sincere and an evening before it is much above the ordinary.

The scene is a British general hospital on the Assam-Burma front. There are wounded soldiers from Australia, Britain, New Zealand, the United States and elsewhere. A Scotsman, who has only a few weeks to live, is placed in the ward. He is embittered and sour; he will take nothing, including friendship. Gradually the other men win him out of himself; he has decided to like them, when he hears they had known he is to die. Bitter once more, he accuses them of having given only pity; at the end they persuade him otherwise. Headquarters has offered to send him back home for his short remaining weeks, but he decides to stay with his friends in the hospital ward.

No one can deny that occasionally "The Hasty Heart" goes over into the sentimental, or that Mr. Patrick has heeded the voice of allen idols in having the Scotsman and his nurse fall in love. Some of the scenes are long, and actions once or twice are repeated unnecessarily. But the human manner in which the characters speak and the warmth of feeling with which the author tells his story more than make up for the weaker spots. Mr. Patrick's soldiers are soldiers; they are terse, they are individualistic, they hunger for home and the mail, they are essentially good-hearted, they like discussions, they have humor and an easy understanding.

Richard Basehart plays the Scotsman and does it very well. An audience knowing that the leading character is doomed to die would feel pity; Mr. Basehart, like Lachlen, will have no part of that. The actor is as dour as any proper Scot, and when the proper time comes he can unbend—like any Scot. John Lund also gives an excellent performance as Yank, who is generous and helpful, but draws the line at unreasonableness. John Campbell, Victor Chapin, Earl Jones and Douglas Chandler are the other soldiers, and Anne Burr, the only woman in the cast, is the nurse in charge of the ward. Bretaigne Windust has directed so that the humor and pathos of the play flow easily together.

"The Hasty Heart" is not essentially a war play, but rather one about a group of human beings who just happened to meet because of a war. It poses no problems; it tries to look into character and tell a story in theatrical terms. It succeeds.

All the information you need right at your finger-tips

New York Motion Picture Critics' Reviews

Indispensable to producers, casting directors, writers, exhibitors. Invaluable as a lasting record of the stars and their pictures.

You, too — Want to keep informed!

Theatre and circuit owners, bookers and publicity men throughout this country and Canada inform us that these reviews are most helpful. In this form they are able to get the opinions of not one, but EIGHT critics; each writing independently of the other; each writing from the viewpoint of the millions of readers of his or her newspaper. Publicity departments will find these reviews a valuable source for new and original material.